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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM The Today Show

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NBC Network

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CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Interview with Gayle Rivers

BRYANT GUMBEL: Here's a bizarre question for a Wednesday morning: Does the United States hire assassins? Our next guest says yes. He claims the United States Government paid him to kill three Syrian colonels in Beirut. He goes by the name Gayle Rivers. He agreed to appear on Today only if his face was kept in shadow.

Though he shuns the camera, Gayle Rivers has just come out with a book. It's called Specialist, revealing life as a counterterrorist. It's a book that is already causing quite a bit of a stir in Great Britain.

And good morning.

GAYLE RIVERS: Good morning.

GUMBEL: I called you a counterterrorist. What label would you put on what you claim to have done?

RIVERS: I'd agree with the term counterterrorist and specialist.

GUMBEL: How'd you get in this line of work?

RIVERS: Basically, because of the experience I had in Vietnam with the New Zealand forces, which led to certain expertise being gained.

GUMBEL: Why'd you ask to come on in shadow today?

RIVERS: Naturally, for security reasons.

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GUMBEL: You say "naturally," and yet if you really were concerned with security, you wouldn't have written the book.

RIVERS: Well, the book has a thing to say. And obviously, the security is also involving other people mentioned in the book whose names have been changed but could be put in place if I was recognized.

GUMBEL: Uh-huh.

Couldn't the people who hired you, by the events in your book, determine your real identity anyway?

RIVERS: Perhaps some of the people who've hired me know the book exists, as it is in the present form.

GUMBEL: Uh-huh.

You claim to have been hired by our government to kill three Syrian colonels. This in retaliation for the attack on our barracks, Marine barracks in Beirut. Who hired you, and for how much?

RIVERS: I was hired on the basis of a phone call to myself in Switzerland, as is explained in the book, because the situation that existed in Beirut involved Marines on the ground who had a role to play that basically put them in a position of being sitting ducks. It was learned that some Syrians were in Beirut to generate more activity against the American forces. And I was basically hired to go in and extract, take out those Syrians. If not take them out physically, then to make sure that their work wasn't completed in influencing the Druze on the time.

GUMBEL: Let me ask you something. Our government has in its employ specially trained troops, it has intelligence agents, it has weapons experts, demolitions experts. Why, if this were true would our government feel the need to go outside of the ranks to find someone to do this kind of work?

RIVERS: Well, I suppose the best way to explain that is that people like myself, those specialists, if you like, remain deniable people. The people that I used on that particular mission were highly trained American specialists in their own form. The reason that I'm employed is that I'm a specialist that remains deniable.

GUMBEL: Are there others like you? I mean are we supposed to believe that our government routinely, with regularity, hires people to do this kind of work?

RIVERS: I wouldn't say routinely or regularly. But I'm

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certainly not unique. There are other specialists, such as myself, that exist.

GUMBEL: Why should anyone believe this book?

RIVERS: To believe the book, if it's read by someone with a professional aptitude and someone who's involved in this profession, it would be...

GUMBEL: Which profession are we talking about here?

RIVERS: Either military or intelligence or specialist fields involved in counterterrorism. The book speaks for itself.

As far as the layman is concerned, it'll give them a chance to make up their own minds on what is being done about counterterrorism.

GUMBEL: Your critics have not exactly been kind. The London Times called your book bogus. They said it was comic-book stuff, complete fantasy. "Beam me up, Mr. Scott" was another --in so many words, called you a fraud.

Does that bother you?

RIVERS: No. It's to be expected. I mean the article in the Sunday Times was absolute rubbish. The points pointed out in that particular article weren't attributed to any particular source, except one. That particular source was approached and had a dialogue with my publisher, and it was proven that he was misquoted. And the article, basically, quoted him inaccurately.

GUMBEL: Would you, could you kill anyone for a price?

RIVERS: Not anyone, no. I'm paid for doing what I do because it is dangerous. The people who pay me are people that I select as basically being governments of a non-communist nature and governments that don't employ terrorists.

GUMBEL: Gayle Rivers. The book is The Specialist.

Thank you for being with us.

RIVERS: Thank you.